

Isvara is a Convenient Fiction

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Dear James,

I like your statement, "The self ever experiences itself as one and knows itself without the aid of anything other than itself. It is self-knowing." Nicely said. It's nice reading some of your explanations – I see why you're a popular teacher. However,

1. The above is still dualistic – Self and experience; self and knows.

James: Yes, indeed. Vedanta provisionally accepts duality to help people who don't understand non-duality. In light of the context of the complete teaching, the implied meaning becomes apparent and the statement can deliver non-dual knowledge.

2. ... "until Ravi can say with conviction..." Are you equating moksa with conviction – sthita prajna?

James: No, because moksa is the nature of the self, not an event. However, a jnani is a 'person of steady wisdom,' (stithya pragna) to quote the Gita. A 'firm conviction' is hard and fast knowledge. Vedanta converts the belief "I am the self, which most inquirers accept on the basis of scripture, into unshakable knowledge. After all, it is the intellect that needs knowledge.

3. What I'm reading sounds like bhavarupa Maya - accepting Sat/asat vilakshana as an existent. Avidya can only be abhavarupa. There is no snake.

James: Yes, from the self's point of view. However, the sat-asat-vilakshana prakriya is not intended for the self. It is intended to point out the nature of Maya to a discriminator, which is the key to resolving the "I am the doer" doubt which is tantamount to moksa. Maya is both existent and non-existent. It exists from the jiva's perspective and it doesn't exist from the self's perspective. To say that it is only non-existent is to ignore mithya, which will not lead to moksa, since moksa is knowing the difference between satya and mithya. Vedanta is not about permanently cementing concepts in the intellect, only about using concepts to negate all self concepts, 'returning' the self to its natural 'state.'

4. neti-neti Atman is Tat twam asi or the removal of all distinctions - not the affirmation of a knowable entity.

James: Yes, but it amounts to the affirmation of one's self as the self, which is a knowable entity, not as an object obviously, but as the ever-experienced and always known subject. This is why nobody ever told you that you are conscious or that you exist. You love yourself because you are a terribly positive knowable entity. It is self evident... without the aid of a means of knowledge. It's not pure original consciousness (puran atma) that has the doubt. It is original consciousness under the spell of Maya. Once Vedanta shows you who you are, no affirmations are necessary... it is something you have always known and loved. If affirmations are necessary, some nididhasana is required to root out pesky pratibandakas and obtain the fruit of self knowledge, perfect satisfaction (tripti). There are two stages of enlightenment after direct knowledge, except in

the case of *uttama adhikaris*.

5. *Pramata, prameya, pramana* fall with knowledge of *Atma.Eshwara's Maya* is a convenient fiction for the sake of teaching – it has no substantial reality. *Jnana* doesn't deal with a "sugar vasana". This, I believe, reflects Sankara's teaching. Just so we're clear, I offer the above in the spirit of Gita 10.32, "of those who debate I am *vada*" – only wishing to determine true purport.

James: Yes, indeed. *Isvara* is indeed a convenient fiction. My statement was from the point of view of the 'convenience' factor. The point of that teaching is to remove the idea that there is a doer after *moksa* that needs to purify the mind. However, purification of the mind happens before and after *moksa* **in so far as moksa is an event which it isn't: it is the nature of the self.** Before it happens with self effort...the first section of the Gita is all about using free will to purify the mind for *moksa*. After *moksa*, it happens by knowledge, not action, although from the outside it seems as if the doer is still keeping up its *sadhana*. Krishna says, "there is no purifier equivalent to self knowledge." In fact, even a doer who has been properly taught and is using *karma yoga* or *jnana yoga* to purify the mind, is actually using knowledge, which is equivalent to saying that knowledge is doing the work.

You can't tell the whole truth to everyone all at once, if you want to be a successful teacher. There is always a bit of fiction because the teaching is a fiction. But Vedanta is a good fiction, the thorn that removes the thorn.

The problem with the Neo Advaita teachers is that they can't get it in their heads that they have to give the devil its due, provisionally accept duality and patiently lead the inquirer out of ignorance if they want to be successful, meaning if they want to help people get truly free. The reason they do this is that they pander to the notion that *moksa* is an event and they care what people think about them. If they said they did *sadhana* after *moksa* people wouldn't listen to them because everybody wants to be free of karma. People would say, "He's not the self, he's still doing karma" which simply means that *moksa* means that you are as free to do as you are free not to do, although the doer is not actually free to not do anything but karma. Why? Because *Isvara (antaryamin)* makes everyone to act according to their *prarabdha*, irrespective of their wishes.

Seventy percent or more of the people I teach told me that *neti neti* was helpful for *anta karana suddhi* (it is) but didn't work as far *tripti*, the fruit of self knowledge, is concerned. Categorical statements delivered from the self's perspective like 'there is no world, no doer, no teaching, no teacher' etc. may work for the odd *uttama adhikari*, but it only creates frustration for the average *mumukshu*. The person to whom I made that statement needed to know that a lot of patience is required when you are working on *samskaras*. It doesn't bother me if people think I am enlightened because nearly everybody has the idea that *moksa* is an event. If it is an event, it has nothing to do with me because I am neither enlightened nor unenlightened; I'm the self. If that's too much for 'people' they can take me as a normal human being; it's all the same. It's the words and the way that words are used that count. I just do what I do and say what I say to help sincere people wherever they are and wherever they are on the path and I don't give a damn what 'people' think. There is nothing for me to gain from teaching. It is *Isvara's* will. There are moments when "I" wish I wasn't such a successful teacher but since that "I" is a *mithya* "I" it is fine with me.

Om and Prem,

James